

# Questors celebrates with Chekhov's play

## The Cherry Orchard The Questors Theatre, Ealing

CHEKHOV'S last play, The Cherry Orchard was chosen to celebrate the 75th anniversary of The Questors Theatre.

The play set in pre-revolutionary Russia, centres around Madame Ranyevskaya, played by Anne Neville, a landowner who returns from Paris to her dilapidated estate.

Her family are in debt and can only free themselves by selling their beloved cherry orchard.

Chekhov portrays a disappearing way of life, as Ranyevskaya is unable to deal with the reality that times have changed.

She constantly harks back to the past and hands out money to anyone who asks for it despite the fact she is no longer rich.

Her inability to move on is shown through her reluctance to lose the cherry orchard, which represents the family's past.

The play is set after the emancipation of the serfs and idealistic student, Trofimov, played by Iain Stirling, laments the pain of

those who maintained the orchard without pay.

Roles of servant and master are subverted



**Robert Baker-Glenn as landowner Simeonov-Pishchik**



**Anne Neville as Madame Ranyevskaya, in foreground, with Izabella Urbanowicz as Vanya, Madame Ranyevskaya's adopted daughter**

as loyal servant, Firs, played by Vincent McQueen, who has been with the

family since the days of serfdom, is contrasted with Yasha, a rakish footman, played by John Barron, who steals from the family and mocks their behaviour.

Ultimately Ranyevskaya is forced to admit times have changed when businessman Lopakhin, played by Simon Roberts, whose ancestors worked as serfs on the orchard, buys the estate.

Chairs were put where the stage usually stands in Questor's, creating a circle where the action takes place.

Around the auditorium, pictures of trees give the impression the audience are inside the house looking out at the orchard.

There are constant reminders of serfdom, as servants dressed in Russian peasant clothes change the sets, rather than the usual stagehands in black.

The play ends on bleak note when the family leave the house, bolting the doors behind them, leaving the audience feeling abandoned in the house.

Loyal servant, Firs, has been forgotten and the final scene sees him dying as we hear the sound of the cherry orchard falling down around us.

Full marks to the cast for bringing portraying the moments of comedy and sheer bleakness as well as pronouncing some very long names.

**Tammy Lovell**



feature

# Questors celebrates with Chekhov



A scene from Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*

**T**HE Questors Theatre marks the end of its 75th anniversary season with a gala production of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, which opens at the venue tonight (Friday).

The tragi-comedy, which celebrates two anniversaries of its own – the double centenary of its first performance and of the playwright's death, centres around Madame Ranyevskaya, whose family are deeply in debt and can only free themselves from it by selling the family's beloved cherry orchard.

Making the decision to sell their estate symbolises the severing of personal and historical ties, cutting them off from the past and abandoning them to an uncertain future.

■ The *Cherry Orchard* is performed in the Playhouse at the Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, Ealing, tonight (Friday), and Saturday, November 6, Thursday, November 11 and Friday, November 12 at 7.45pm and Saturday, November 13 at 7pm. A Saturday matinee will be held at 2.30pm. Tickets are £10.50/£13/£17 for guests and £7.50/£9/£15 for members. Box office: 020 8567 5184 or log onto the [www.questors.ork.uk](http://www.questors.ork.uk) website.



Above right, The Questors Theatre as it used to look, and, above, as it looks today, at an open day earlier this year